



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EL PASO MAN ENTERS GUILTY PLEAS IN TWO SEPARATE CASES

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that Steven Earl Cottingham pled guilty to Mailing a Threatening Communication and Threatening to Use a Weapon of Mass Destruction. In an unrelated matter, Cottingham pled guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Bank Fraud.

“Threatening to commit terrorist acts can never be tolerated and must be confronted aggressively. Today’s guilty plea by Cottingham should send a clear message that those who try to intimidate others by threatening violence will be held accountable.” stated **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton**.

In the first case, by pleading guilty, Cottingham admitted that on August 28, 2003 he placed in the U.S. mail an envelope that read “POSTMAN DIE” which contained a white powdery substance and a letter that read “NINE ELEVEN ALL OVER AGAIN.” Cottingham also admitted that on August 30, 2003, he deposited into the U.S. mail an envelope with the words “E.L.F.” (Earth Liberation Front) and “FOR THE EL PASO FBI”. This letter also had a white powdery substance and contained threatening language indicating that the next letter might contain Anthrax. This letter also named a number of public institutions that might receive the next letter.

On September 10, 2003, two separate letters were found at El Paso businesses containing the same threatening language as the two previous letters. Cottingham also admitted that he sent these letters to the businesses.

In the second case, Cottingham admitted that he created counterfeit checks drawn on the account of the Islamic Center of El Paso. Specifically, he created the following counterfeit checks:

- July 7, 2003, in the amount of \$6,000 made payable to his wife
- July 8, 2003, in the amount of \$4,500 made payable to his wife
- July 9, 2003, in the amount of \$5,000 made payable to his wife
- July 10, 2003, in the amount of \$8,000 made payable to his wife
- July 12, 2003, in the amount of \$17, 591.62 made payable to his wife

Sentencing has been set for December 14, 2004, before U.S. District Judge David Briones. Cottingham faces up to life in prison.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and The U.S. Postal Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorneys Greg McDonald and Steve Garcia are prosecuting these cases on behalf of the Government.

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